

appeared to avoid the disadvantages alike of isolation and of competing groups. Though comradeship with France remained an axiom, there was no thought of an alliance, written or implied. It was well understood that changes were inevitable, but it was hoped that they could be peacefully made in the spirit of Article XIX of the Covenant. "We have, as I read the lesson of the time," declared Curzon in 1921, "to keep what we have obtained, sometimes against our will; not to seize anything else; to reconcile, not defy; to pacify, not to conquer." It is always easy for satiated states to play the part of the good boy till the acid test of their readiness to make territorial sacrifices is applied.

II. THE WASHINGTON TREATIES

If our entry into the League, with all that it implied, was the first major decision of British policy on the return of peace, the second was the termination of our alliance with Japan. Formed in 1902 as a barrier against Russian domination in the Far East, and expanded in 1905, it was renewed for ten years in 1911. Japan's debt to us for keeping the ring in her triumphant struggle with Russia was repaid when she drove the Germans out of Kiao-Chau and helped us to clear the Pacific of German ships. Having fulfilled her obligations, she naturally expected the alliance to be renewed. Influential British voices argued that we should be guilty of gross ingratitude in dropping our partner when we no longer required her services, and that the wounded pride of a Great Power might ultimately prove a danger in the Far East. Others pointed to the fact that the disapproval of the alliance by the United States was unconcealed, fearing as they did the possibility of England being dragged into a Japanese-American war. Only a little less pronounced was the

antagonism of
Canada and New Zealand. It was a formidable
dilemma for
the Lloyd George Ministry, which desired to
combine honour-
able dealing with a regard for trans-atlantic
sentiment.

Fortunately it proved unnecessary for us to
show our old
friends the door. In the summer of 1921
President Harding
invited the Powers to meet in Washington in
November for
a discussion of naval competition and the
problems of the
Far East. The aim of the Anglo-Japanese treaty,
after the
formal annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910,
had been to
maintain the *status quo* in the north western
Pacific. This
object was now to be attained in a different
way. The signa-